



# The Monitor

A Quarterly Newsletter of the National Capital Region's Inventory and Monitoring Program

## National Capital Region's Inventory and Monitoring Program: Who we are and what we do!

The National Park Service is implementing a nationwide Inventory and Monitoring (I & M) program at over 270 National Parks. Participating parks have been grouped based on ecological and/or regional similarities. These groups of parks (32 total) are commonly referred to as networks. The National Capital Region contains a single network, the National Capital Network, and it is composed of 11 parks (Antietam National Battlefield, Catocin Mountain Park, C&O Canal National Historical Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, Manassas National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, National Capital Parks – East, Prince William Forest Park, Rock Creek Park, and Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts).

Currently, the Network's I & M program has a staff of six: a Regional Inventory and Monitoring Coordinator, a Monitoring Coordinator, a Biological Inventories Coordinator, a Data Manager, and two Biotechnicians. The staff is charged with reviewing existing data of plants and animals, entering it into online databases, and implementing field surveys to fill information gaps (an example of an ongoing field survey is described in "We're Cuckoo About You", page 2). The staff is also conducting a planning process to establish a comprehensive and long-



Researchers from Frostburg State University, in cooperation with the Inventory and Monitoring program, conduct a fish survey in C&O Canal NHP. (NPS Photo)

### Inventory and Monitoring: We're Live

Have you ever woken up at night and said to yourself, "I wonder what that National Capital Region Inventory and Monitoring Program is up to"? Well, the good news is we are now a mouse click away. The Program has posted a web page to the Internet.

Although some sections are still being constructed, detailed information concerning the program goals, biological inventories and monitoring, and staff are available. Furthermore, the site will host reports and links to all of the products developed by the Inventory and Monitoring program as

they are completed. So, browse through our web site at:

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/im/units/nw12/index.html> and let us know what you think.

Are you interested in similar programs across the nation? Check out this site <http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/index.htm> with information from other Inventory and Monitoring networks.

Can't get enough of Inventory and Monitoring? Check out the national brochure <http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/brochure/index.htm>.

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## Coordinator's Corner

By Dr. Jim Sherald  
Chief, Natural Resources and Science

On Nov. 1, 2002, Dr. Ellen van Snick Gray resigned as the National Capital Region I&M Coordinator for her new position as a fulltime mom. All of us wish Ellen the best! We were indeed very fortunate to have had such a superb leader in the initial stages of our program's development. Today the National Capital Region's I&M Network is recognized as one of the premier networks throughout the Service. Within the next few weeks we will begin the search for the next coordinator. Whoever is selected will have an excellent foundation upon which to build and a fantastic staff to lead into the long-term monitoring phase of the program. As we make this transition and begin our third year it may be useful to look back at how the I&M program began.

In August 1999, Robert Stanton, then Director of the National Park Service (NPS), announced a new plan to improve the way the NPS manages its natural resources. This plan, the Natural Resource Challenge, identified challenges to resource preservation and strategies to deal with these challenges. Among other things, the plan identified a need for information concerning species diversity, abundance, and distribution in all parks with significant natural resources. The plan also identified the need to monitor the condition of natural resources over time so that sound management decisions in support of resource preservation can be made.

The National Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program was developed in response to the needs identified by the Natural Resource Challenge and is supported through this funding. The National Capital Region's I&M Program has been funded since 2000 to

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## We're Cuckoo About You: Volunteers

### Provide Valuable Insight into Park Bird Communities

The National Parks are an important part of many people's lives. Parks are often vacation destinations, but also provide a quiet place to sit or exercise, and even offer educational opportunities. Perhaps it is because of some of these life enriching activities people receive from National Parks that they are so willing give back to parks through volunteerism. The Inventory and Monitoring program has benefited greatly from volunteers who have been conducting bird surveys in six parks since 2001.

During the early stages of the National Capital Region's Inventory and Monitoring program, a review of available data on bird species within our parks determined that basic species information was needed for six parks. A large number of local avid bird watchers and clubs provided a cost effective means to complete the inventory. More than 30 volunteers have joined efforts with the National Park Service at Antietam National Battlefield, Catoctin Mountain Park, Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, Manassas National

Battlefield, Prince William Forest Park, and Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts.

Bird inventory volunteers began visiting the parks in January 2001, and have collectively spent over 2,000 hours in the field through 2002. While the hours are impressive, it is the 175 species which they have documented in the parks that are of the greatest value to resource management (many of these species have never been recorded in the parks). Furthermore, the volunteers have made special efforts to confirm nesting species; particularly those identified as species of concern by Partners in Flight. The data collected will provide park managers with seasonal and breeding distributions, which can be used to identify and protect critical habitats.

Due to the efforts of the volunteers, the initial bird inventory program goal of documenting 90% of the expected resident bird species has been reached at four of six parks (Antietam, Catoctin, Manassas, and Prince William).

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Volunteers participate in the Inventory and Monitoring program's bird inventory at Manassas National Battlefield. Volunteers have collectively spent over 2,000 hours participating in the Region's bird inventory. (Photo by Paula Sullivan)

# Get To Know Your Local Natural Resources

As you prepare to visit your favorite National Park this week, do you wish there was a way to become better acquainted with it's natural resources before arriving? Well, many parks have, and all soon will have a web page called the Natural Resource Profile.

The Natural Resource Challenge stated that "Each park's Internet home page...will be revised to showcase the fundamental purpose of the park, the park's major resources, and the significance and context of those resources." To assist parks in completing this action, the Natural Resource Profiles data management system was designed as an easy-to-use database that can be customized for each park. The profile provides current natural resource information in a standard format, and can be viewed by everyone.

While the home page provides holistic information, web-based links on the page quickly bring viewers to topical features



Home page of the National Capital Parks – East Natural Resource Profile.

on animals, environmental features, natural features, plants, and other life forms. In addition to general resource descriptions and photos, the Natural Resource Profiles may also include species lists, reports, slide shows and links to other Internet pages.

Every park profile is slightly different as they are developed and maintained by staff within each park, but all profiles are formatted similarly and are easy to access and browse. So, take a look at

your favorite parks Natural Resource Profile. It can be a learning experience!

Parks with completed Natural Resource Profiles have a "Nature and Science" link under the heading "Park Resources" on their Internet home page (e.g. <http://www.nps.gov/anti>). The following parks in the National Capital Region have Natural Resource Profiles available for viewing: Antietam National Battlefield (anti), Catocin Mountain Park (cato), Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park (choh), Harper's Ferry National Historical Park (hafe), Manassas National Battlefield Park (mana), National Capital Parks East (nace), and Prince William Forest Park (prwi). Watch for the Natural Resource Profiles from George Washington Memorial Parkway (gwmp), Monocacy National Battlefield (mono), National Capital Parks Central (nacc), Rock Creek Park (rocr), and Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts (wotr) to be available soon.

## They Do What?

It's a wonderful time of the year. The fall approaches, the trees begin to change color, the temperature drops, and National Park Service staff are out counting the deer.

Deer are an important part of the park ecosystem and it is necessary to estimate the population size. Just as the U.S. Census Bureau collects information on demographic trends, The National Park Service wants similar information on deer so that they can make the best management decisions.

We often get questions about the deer counts and hope to answer some of these questions here.

You have never seen us counting deer in the park? Well, that might be

because as you are just climbing into bed at night we begin counting the deer.

Why do we count deer at night? Deer are more active in the early morning, evening, and nighttime hours than during the day. So while you might see two deer in a field during the day, there may be fifty at night.

How can we see the deer in the dark? Well, just as your headlights will cause a deer eyes to glow, we use high-powered spotlights to shine deep into the woods. We count the number of deer, how far away they are from us, and their gender. We use all the information to estimate how many deer are in the park.

Why do the eyes shine? In most nocturnal mammals, including deer, there is a structure called the "tapetum" within the eye. This structure reflects light back to the retina and improves nighttime vision. The reflection of light from this structure causes the eyes of deer to shine.

Do you have some questions that you would like us to answer or a topic that you are curious about? Write to us and we will cover some of these topics in future issues.

Contact: Inventory and Monitoring Program, National Park Service, Center for Urban Ecology, 4598 MacArthur Blvd., NW, Washington, DC 20007.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Center for Urban Ecology  
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"The Monitor" is a quarterly newsletter of the National Capital Region's Inventory and Monitoring Program.

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### Who we are... (continued from p. 1)

term monitoring program of the region's most important natural resources. Numerous scientists and partners from throughout the region and nation have been donating their technical expertise through a series of workshops and meetings.

Although the program's duties are large, the Inventory and Monitoring program will provide much needed data. The information will help parks improve the management of their natural resources, and preserve the resources for future generations.

### Coordinator's Corner (continued from p. 2)

implement biological inventories and since 2001 to initiate a long-term monitoring program.

The Region's Inventory and Monitoring

program has already begun providing information to parks concerning their natural resources, and it is because of the Natural Resource Challenge that this information became available.

### We're Cuckoo... (continued from p. 2)

However, as the program is volunteer based, it will continue at all parks as long as participants are interested.

For more information on the Bird Inventory or to volunteer, contact: Biological Inventories Coordinator, Inventory and Monitoring Program, National Park Service, Center for Urban Ecology, 4598 MacArthur Blvd., NW, Washington, DC 20007.